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WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) presented Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with its 2009 Annual Report in a private meeting, June 8 at the State Department.

“We are grateful that Secretary Clinton took the time to meet with us,” said Felice Gaer, USCIRF chair, after the meeting. “It is clear that Secretary Clinton understands the importance of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The members of this Commission look forward to working with the Obama administration, as it puts its stamp on this important issue.”

Also attending the meeting were USCIRF vice chairs Elizabeth Prodromou and Michael Cromartie, and USCIRF Commissioners Don Argue, Imam Talal Eid, Richard Land, Leonard Leo, and Nina Shea.

In addition to presenting Mrs. Clinton with the annual report, Mrs. Clinton and the USCIRF Commissioners discussed:

- The need to defend freedom of religion and related rights and to oppose the “Defamation of Religions” resolution before the United Nations and blasphemy and apostasy laws in many nations, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- The USCIRF concern that the CPC mechanism is an underutilized tool in the State Department’s diplomatic toolbox and the U.S. government should take distinct presidential actions when a country is designated to the list of “Countries of Particular Concern,” rather than rely on pre-existing sanctions.
- USCIRF’s hope that the president would soon appoint a new Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.
- And, that the State Department would publicly raise key religious freedom cases, such as the seven Baha’is in Iran, Ismailis in Saudi Arabia, religious leaders in Uzbekistan, and Nguyen Van Dai, Fr. Nguyen Van Ly, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and others imprisoned for their beliefs in Vietnam.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress. To

interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Tom Carter, Communications Director at [tcarter@uscirf.gov](mailto:tcarter@uscirf.gov) or

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